



## Frequently Asked Questions

November 2009

### **What is the “Altamont Corridor Rail Project”?**

The Altamont Corridor Rail Project is intended to provide a “world class” rail connection between northern San Joaquin Valley and the Bay Area via Altamont Pass and the Tri-Valley area. The project would provide a new dedicated passenger line capable of supporting intercity and commuter rail service which would vastly improve the existing Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) service operating between Stockton and San Jose, as well as serve as a feeder to the statewide high-speed train system under development by the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

### **Why is the California High-Speed Rail Authority involved with this project?**

The Regional Rail Plan adopted by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in 2007 recommended that higher speed regional services should be provided along the Altamont Pass route in conjunction with implementation of high-speed rail in northern California. Subsequently, the California High-Speed Rail Authority in its 2008 Bay Area to Central Valley EIS/EIR indicated that it would be willing to develop a “joint” regional and high-speed compatible passenger rail project through the Altamont Pass with the support of local stakeholders. The Authority has jurisdiction for passenger services operating at speeds over 125 miles per hour, and portions of the Altamont route would potentially operate at such speeds, in addition to being able to handle the Authority’s high-speed trains. Proposition 1A, approved by California voters in November 2008, includes the Altamont Corridor in the alignments listed as eligible to receive bond funding.

### **What will happen to the existing Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) service?**

The ACE service operated by the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission will continue to operate in the near term. It is hoped that the Altamont Corridor Rail Project will identify and will provide the necessary environmental review for improvements within the corridor which could be used to incrementally upgrade the ACE service by providing higher speed, dedicated passenger tracks. In the long term, when the Central Valley sections of the statewide high-speed train system are completed and the Altamont Corridor is electrified, regional trains could potentially operate between the Bay Area and cities such as Sacramento and Merced via the Altamont Corridor. In order to operate over the high-speed train system, Altamont trains would need to be compatible with the high-speed trains. The environmental process will evaluate options for upgrading existing ACE equipment so that services can shift to the improved corridor over time as improvements are phased in.

### **Wasn’t the Pacheco Pass route, instead of one crossing the Altamont Pass, selected for the connection between the Bay Area and Central Valley in the high-speed rail network?**

The Pacheco Pass was selected by the Authority as the preferred route for statewide high-speed express trains that would operate between San Francisco and Los Angeles via San Jose. At the same time, the Authority indicated that it would work with regional partners to make improvements in the Altamont Corridor to satisfy a different purpose and need from the proposed statewide high-speed train system. The Authority is spearheading environmental studies and working in partnership with other agencies to secure local, state, federal, and private funding to develop a joint-use infrastructure project in the Altamont Corridor.



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### **How is ACE involved?**

ACE and the Authority are working in partnership towards the implementation of the Altamont Corridor Rail Project. The Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) is owned and managed by the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC). The SJRRRC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Authority to jointly work to develop the Altamont Corridor Rail Project. SJRRRC has agreed to serve as a “responsible agency” under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is also assembling funds to support project development and construction. The MOU with ACE also provides that ACE will work together with the Authority to develop the Merced to Sacramento section of the high-speed line so that ACE trains could potentially operate both on the Altamont route as well as the Valley route.

### **The Altamont Corridor Rail Project is described as a partnership with “local and regional agencies and transit providers.” What parties are involved?**

The Altamont Corridor Partnership Working Group is focused on the planning and implementation of the joint-use Altamont Corridor Rail Project. The Working Group includes the following members:

- California High-Speed Rail Authority
- Alameda County Congestion Management Agency
- Altamont Commuter Express
- Bay Area Rapid Transit District
- Caltrain
- California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
- Capital Corridor Joint Powers Authority
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments
- San Joaquin Council of Governments / San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission
- San Mateo County Transit District
- Tri-Valley Regional Rail Policy Advisory Committee

The Working Group recognizes the importance of the corridor for regional transportation needs and has reached consensus on the corridor limits (Stockton to San Jose), principal features including key intermodal connections, and goals and objectives which include improving the ACE service in the near term, as well as developing capability to accommodate high-speed trains through connections to the statewide high-speed train (HST) system and HST-compatible equipment. The Working Group will continue to support the project as it moves forward in the planning and implementation process.

### **How fast will trains operate on the Altamont Corridor? Will high-speed trains be operated?**

The maximum speed at which trains will operate will depend upon the alignment that is identified and developed. Trains could potentially operate at speeds of 150 mile per hour or more in rural areas away from cities and towns. However, in urbanized areas, the speeds are likely to be considerably lower. The long-term project will be fully grade separated, electrified, and suitable for operation with trains similar to those operating on the statewide high-speed train system. This will allow Altamont Corridor trains to reach destinations on the statewide system such as Sacramento and Merced.



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### **Where will stations be located? Will parking be provided?**

The Authority in cooperation with the other members of the Altamont Corridor Partnership Working Group will work with agencies and the public to identify station locations during the Alternatives Analysis process. Stations in the following cities may be considered: Stockton, Modesto, Tracy, Livermore, Pleasanton, Union City, Fremont, Milpitas and San Jose. Station locations will be selected to optimize intermodal connections with the statewide high-speed rail network, BART, other existing and potential rail services, and local transit lines. The Authority will assess the projected ridership at each station location and work with local governments to determine appropriate facilities for meeting parking demand.

### **Will the Altamont Corridor Rail Project serve Oakland or the East Bay?**

The Altamont Corridor Rail Project will connect to BART in the Tri-Valley area (in the event BART is extended) and/or in the Fremont / Union City vicinity so that passengers can use BART to travel to Oakland, Oakland Airport, the East Bay and other locations such as Contra Costa County and San Francisco which are served by BART. Joint stations will allow for convenient transfers between BART and Altamont Corridor trains.

### **Will passengers be able to travel west across the Bay from Fremont / Union City?**

SamTrans is currently pursuing a Dumbarton Bridge rail service project which will provide a connection for CalTrain equipment to cross the bay and connect with the Capitol Corridor and BART in the Union City vicinity. The Altamont Corridor Rail Project route planning and environmental studies will consider potential connections to a future Dumbarton rail service in the Fremont / Union City vicinity. The project team is working closely with SamTrans to coordinate planning so that potential future connection opportunities are not precluded.

### **How will this project be funded?**

The \$9 billion in bond proceeds provided for in Proposition 1A are available for planning and eligible capital costs on the entire 800-mile high-speed rail network and the Altamont Corridor. However, the first priority for use of bond funds is to complete the San Francisco to Anaheim "Phase One" corridor segment, as identified in Proposition 1A. The other segments of the high-speed network and the Altamont Corridor can compete for and use the bond proceeds and other available funding, as long as this has no adverse impact on the San Francisco to Anaheim priority segment. The Authority and ACE are cooperating to identify all potential future funding sources for the Altamont Corridor. ACE is presently identifying local funds to support the project. The Obama Administration may provide additional funds for high-speed rail and higher speed regional rail through subsequent reauthorizations of the transportation bill. These funding sources may allow ACE to implement improvements that it has already programmed in the near term, before high-speed rail service is implemented. Such improvements would be developed in cooperation with the Authority as incremental steps toward the ultimate project goal of a high-speed compatible route in the corridor.

### **What is the schedule for the Altamont Corridor Project? When will construction begin? When will it open for service?**

The project definition, public participation, and alternatives analysis activities of the project are currently underway. According to the current schedule, the environmental review process and preliminary engineering will conclude in 2013. Final design and construction will follow, but the start of construction will depend upon funding. Because the corridor is very long, the project will need to be phased. Efforts will be made to identify "near term" projects which could be constructed to improve the existing ACE service. Once the funding is in place and specific projects are identified, the period of construction and a target date for new service will be identified.



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### **How can I stay informed about progress on the project, ask questions, and provide input?**

The project website [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov) will be updated with the latest project information as it is developed.

There you can join the project mailing list to receive future notifications and newsletters. Open houses and public meetings in each of the three corridor counties will be scheduled in conjunction with the Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement phases of the project. Requests to join the project mailing list, questions, and input can also be directed by mail, phone, fax or email to:

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925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
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(please include "Altamont Corridor Rail Project" in the subject line)

For more information, please visit: [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)